

03-15-00

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PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER

(Large Entity)

Docket No.

END00-0019US1

TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS

Transmitted herewith for filing under 35 U.S.C. 111 and 37 C.F.R. 1.53 is the patent application of:

E. Grenchus et al

For: METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT

Enclosed are:

- ☒ Certificate of Mailing with Express Mail Mailing Label No. EL172582056US
- ☒ TWO (2) sheets of drawings.
- ☐ A certified copy of a application.
- ☒ Declaration ☒ Signed. ☐ Unsigned.
- ☒ Power of Attorney
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement
- ☐ Preliminary Amendment
- ☐ Other:

 Jc658 U.S. PTO
 09/524366
 03/14/00

CLAIMS AS FILED

For	#Filed	#Allowed	#Extra	Rate	Fee
Total Claims	10	- 20 =	0	x \$18.00	\$0.00
Indep. Claims	5	- 3 =	2	x \$78.00	\$156.00
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/>					\$0.00
BASIC FEE					\$690.00
TOTAL FILING FEE					\$846.00

- ☐ A check in the amount of to cover the filing fee is enclosed.
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Dated: 03/14/00

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY "EXPRESS MAIL" (37 CFR 1.10)Applicant(s): **E. Grenchus et al**

Docket No.

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Serial No.

N/A

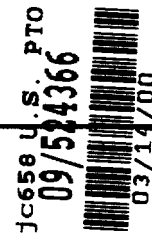
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Examiner

N/A

Group Art Unit

N/ATitle: **METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT**

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**APPLICATION
FOR
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT**

APPLICANT(S) NAME: E. Grenchus et al

TITLE: METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT

DOCKET NO. END00-0019US1

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION

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METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The invention relates to a method and business process for demanufacturing a product. In particular, the invention relates to determining the amount of effort to expend in disassembly of a product to provide the greatest economic benefit in recycling the product itself, its parts, and its basic commodity materials.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Recycling of obsolete and unwanted products provides benefits over alternatives such as disposal in landfills or incineration. Such recycling benefits individuals, companies, and society both financially and by reducing the impact of disposal on the environment. Although applicable to most manufactured products, recycling is of particular interest for information technology products such as personal computers, displays, printers and associated devices because of the ever shortening life cycle before obsolescence of such products.

15 Individual owners as well as companies need to dispose of this obsolete and unwanted equipment. It is typically shipped or delivered to a recycling point operated by a company engaged in the recycling business. Grenchus, Keene, and Nobs describe some aspects of such a recycling business in "Demanufacturing of Information Technology Equipment," published in the Proceedings of the 1997 IEEE International Symposium on Electronics and the Environment, pages 157-160, May 1997 in San Francisco, CA.

Further descriptions can be found in Grenchus, "Overview of IBM's Demanufacturing Process," presented at the Demanufacturing of Electronic Equipment Conference, October 1997, Deerfield Beach, FL and by Grenchus et al. in "Process of Demanufacturing Computer Equipment at IBM's Asset Recovery Center," published in the conference proceedings of the '98 Industrial Engineering SOLUTIONS conference held May 1998 in Banff, Alberta, Canada pages 62-67. The three proceeding documents are incorporated herein by reference.

Upon receipt at a recycling point, the product may be re-sold perhaps with some minimal testing of operability etc. It may be wholly or partially disassembled to remove parts if any, which have a resale value. The remaining product is then typically separated into basic materials such as plastics, precious metals, copper, steel, glass etc, to be sold for their commodity value. The recycling process is performed rapidly because large numbers of products must be handled in order to achieve economics of scale with products which have little or no value individually.

Masato in Japanese patent JP11165160A describes a system for dismantling which involves a merchandise code stuck on the surface of an apparatus. The code is read with an optical reader, and information necessary for dismantling is obtained from an information center where the information was previously accumulated. Use of the code therefore saves time and labor in the disassembly and dismantling.

Bergart in US Patent 5,950,936 describes a system and method for processing waste glass which may be used for the glass commodity noted above.

Boswell in "A Feedback Strategy for a Closed Loop End-of-Life Cycle Process," presented at the IEE/IEEE International Conference on Clean Electronics Products and Technology, Edinburgh, UK, Oct. 9-11, 1995 describes a process for gathering data during de-manufacturing to feed back to product designers. The product designers can then use this input information to design products, including e.g. material selections, so that the products generate the best economic return during recycling at some future time. Although this feedback to designers process is of some benefit, it is based upon todays' economics to estimate what may or may not apply to recycling economics at a future time.

Jung in "The Conundrum of Computer Recycling" published in Resource Recycling Magazine, May 1999 points out that equipment recyclers must make constant decisions about the level of dismantling and material separation to pursue. This effort requires constant attention and employee retraining. Because of the high costs involved, Jung recommends a strategy of extending the life of existing equipment through upgrading and developing a company program for effectively managing end-of-life equipment.

Because of the rapid obsolescence of products with a corresponding rapid change in product and part resale prices, a method and system of dismantling which can be rapidly determined using current resale, commodity and labor prices at the time a product arrives at the recycling point, is therefore needed. It is believed that such a method and system would constitute a significant improvement in the demanufacturing art.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore a principal object of the present invention to enhance the demanufacturing art by providing a method of demanufacturing a product with enhanced capabilities.

5 It is another object to provide a demanufacturing process capable of effectively managing obsolete and unwanted products by rapidly determining the optimum level of disassembly to employ.

10 It is a further object to provide a method of determining the optimum level of demanufacturing a product using current price data stored in a database and a spreadsheet model.

It is yet another object to provide a system for optimally determining in a facile manner the extent to demanufacture a product having a plurality of parts.

These and other objects are attained in accordance with one embodiment of the invention wherein there is provided a method of demanufacturing a product, comprising the steps of, providing a product for demanufacturing, the product having a plurality of parts, wherein each of the parts comprises one or more commodities, collecting a resale price for the product, 20 collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of the parts respectively, collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more of the commodities respectively, determining the labor expense to remove each of the parts from the product, entering the resale prices, the commodity prices, and the labor 25 expense into a computer model, executing the computer model to make a determination of which of the parts to be removed from the

product, and in response to the determination, either offering the product for resale, or removing the parts which were determined to be removed, if any, and offering the parts for resale, and separating any remaining parts of the product into the commodities, and offering the commodities for resale.

In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, there is provided a method of determining the extent to demanufacture a product, comprising the steps of, providing a product for demanufacturing, the product having a plurality of parts, wherein each of the parts comprises one or more commodities, collecting a resale price for the product, collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of the parts respectively, collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more of the commodities respectively, determining the labor expense to remove each of the parts from the product, entering the resale prices, the commodity prices, and the labor expense into a spreadsheet model, and executing the spreadsheet model to decide which of the parts to remove from the product or whether to offer the product for resale.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates in graphical form the change in recovery value of a particular product over time; and

FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating the information flow and decision making steps of the present invention.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

For a better understanding of the present invention, together with other and further objects, advantages, and capabilities thereof, reference is made to the following disclosure and the appended claims in connection with the above-described drawings.

In FIG. 1 there is shown a time graph 10 representing the approximate recovery value of a product over its age in years. In the case of FIG. 1 the product is a particular personal computer processor unit and does not include the display, keyboard, printer, mouse, or other units which may be attached to the processor unit during normal use. The data lines shown in the graph are representative in that each particular product will normally have different specific data lines. Data line 12 depicts the sale price of the unit itself. As with most personal computers, the resale price drops rapidly during the first 3 years due to obsolescence and by year 4 has very little value. Data line 14 depicts the recovery value of parts which can be removed from the processor unit and resold as parts. This value also drops rapidly, reaches a dip at year 5 and then gradually increases reflecting a market demand for parts that are no longer manufactured, but are still in demand to support systems still in service. Eventually another rapid decrease in value occurs as the remainder of these systems are removed from service.

Data line 16 shows the recovery value of the basic materials obtained through commodity recycling and reclamation efforts. At the present time it appears that older machines have a greater commodity recovery value. This may be attributed to a higher weight and therefore a greater amount of material for recovery.

Older machines also tend to have more precious metal content for recovery than newer machines.

Commodity recovery is used throughout industry in order to separate products into unique materials such as steel, aluminum, copper, precious metals, and various plastics. A product is typically shredded into small pieces. The size of the pieces may vary by product but can be so small as to form a powdery material. The shredded material is then separated into commodities such as iron, non ferrous metals, precious metals, and plastics through separating processes involving magnetism, eddy currents, water, air jets etc. Such separating processes are well known and further explanation is not necessary. The product may also be separated through full or partial manual disassembly. Hazardous materials are also removed either before or during the commodity recovery process in accordance with regulatory requirements.

It can be readily seen from FIG. 1 that the three data lines may cross multiple times so that for a particular returned machine, a strategy of obtaining the highest recovery value will depend on the age of that particular machine.

Recovery value above is not the only factor to consider when determining the best demanufacturing level. The cost of part removal and material separation must also be determined. As noted above, Jung recommended a system be developed to effectively manage this problem of determining the best strategy of dismantling and material separation to pursue.

In FIG. 2 there is shown a flowchart 20 of a process for performing such determinations and handling the product

demufacturing. Prices for commodity materials are entered in commodity price database 22. This database as well as all databases to be subsequently described may be any type of data storage apparatus but is preferably an on-line data file on a harddrive of a computer system. The data may be stored using any database system or any other system such as a spreadsheet or specially designed software for storing the commodity price data. Commodity prices are frequently updated to reflect changes in commodity prices over time. One source of commodity prices is the price of past sales to recycling companies. Price quotations can also be used as well as any other reliable source of commodity prices.

Labor rates are entered in labor rate database 24. Because labor rates tend to change less frequently than commodity prices, the labor rates do not need to be updated as frequently. However, the frequency of updating each database can be independently adjusted to insure the data stored in a database is current. One source of labor rates may be an annual financial plan made by the demufacturing company which will perform the dismantling and removal of parts from a product.

Parts values are stored in parts value database 26. A source of parts values may be recent sale prices to parts brokers. Other sources such as quotations, or advertized prices may also be used. Parts values are also frequently updated to insure the data in database 26 is current. It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that databases 22,24, and 26 may be combined into a single database having for example three sets of data. Other combinations are possible without departing from the scope of the invention.

In one embodiment of the invention, commodity database 22 and parts value database 26 are updated monthly and labor rate database is updated annually.

5 In step 28, information on disassembly of a product is entered into a demanufacturing model 30. Demanufacturing for each product is separated into a series of one or more operations based on logical points to stop disassembly. For example if the product is a personal computer, the first operation may be to remove 8 retaining screws and a cover. It would not be logical
10 to stop after removing just 4 screws because the commodity price or parts price of the screws would be insignificant. However after removing the cover, a major plastic part is separated which may increase the commodity value of the remainder by separating out the plastic. Or it may be more logical to remove all plastic parts and then stop. Such logical decisions can be easily made by experience individuals based on the characteristics of each individual product type without undue concern with value because the model will determine which stopping point is best.

15 The following information is entered in step 28 for a product: disassembly level for each operation, commodity type e.g. copper, steel, plastic and weight removed during each operation, salable parts recovered during each operation, labor time required to perform each operation. In addition critical operations may optionally be defined in step 22. Examples of
20 critical operations may be: removal of sensitive parts to prevent disclosure of confidential or trade secret information, recovery of parts needed to satisfy a shortage requirement (usually temporary) for build of other products, removal of parts to prevent their re-use, removal of parts or materials as required
25 by a vendor commodity purchaser - e.g. all plastic must be
30

removed, or removal of hazardous materials as required by regulatory agencies. There may be other reasons or examples of defining optional critical operations.

In step 32, the value of the product, if sold outright is entered into the demanufacturing model.

Once all of the required data is entered, the model is executed to determine the optimal level of demanufacturing. In step 34 the level of demanufacturing which results in the highest commodity value is determined irrespective of the parts or whole product value. In step 36 the level of demanufacturing resulting in the highest removed parts value is determined regardless of commodity or whole product values. In step 38 the value of selling the whole product is determined. This may be merely the value entered in step 32 or may include other factors relating to such a sale.

In step 40, if the whole product value is greater than both the highest commodity and highest parts value, then a determination is made to sell the whole product. In step 42, further comparisons are made for each level of demanufacturing to determine which level results in the greatest difference between parts minus part removal labor and commodities minus commodity labor.

In step 46, the remaining level of the machine is determined to be separated and sold as commodities or sold to a commodity dealer who will also perform the separation.

Regardless of the determinations made in steps 40, 42 and 46, if critical operations are defined as noted above, then model

30 can be adapted to cause such critical operations to override such determinations before proceeding with the type of determination made in steps 40, 42, and 46. Sequences and steps other than the embodiment just described may be used for level determination without departing from the scope of invention.

Model 30 generates in step 44 a report listing the recommended demanufacturing level and maximum return value. Other optional reports may also be generated such as the value by operation or at each demanufacturing level, comparison of such value to a plan, a labor expense breakdown or summary by operation, and projected commodity and sales parts by operation.

While there have been shown and described what are at present considered the preferred embodiments of the invention, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method of demanufacturing a product, comprising the steps
2 of:

3 providing a product for demanufacturing, said product having a
4 plurality of parts, wherein each of said parts comprises one or
5 more commodities;

6 collecting a resale price for said product;

7 collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of said
8 parts respectively;

9 collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more of said
10 commodities respectively;

11 determining the labor expense to remove said each of said parts
12 from said product;

13 entering said resale prices, said commodity prices, and said
14 labor expense into a computer model;

15 executing said computer model to make a determination of which of
16 said parts to be removed from said product; and

17 in response to said determination, either offering said product
18 for resale, or removing said parts which were determined to be
19 removed, if any and offering said parts for resale, separating
20 any remaining parts into said commodities, and offering said
21 commodities for resale.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said resale prices, said
2 commodity prices, and said labor expense are provided from a
3 database.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said database is periodically
2 updated.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said database is updated
2 monthly.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said computer model is a
2 spreadsheet model.

3 6. A method of determining the extent to demanufacture a product,
4 comprising the steps of:

5 providing a product for demanufacturing, said product having a
6 plurality of parts, wherein each of said parts comprises one or
7 more commodities;

8 collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of said
9 parts respectively;

10 collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more of said
11 commodities respectively;

12 determining the labor expense to remove said each of said parts
from said product;

entering said resale prices, said commodity prices, and said

13 labor expense into a spreadsheet model; and
14 executing said spreadsheet model to decide which of said parts to
15 remove from said product.

1 7. A method of determining the extent to demanufacture a product,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 providing a product for demanufacturing, said product having a
4 plurality of parts, wherein each of said parts comprises one or
5 more commodities;

6 collecting a resale price for said product;

7 collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of said
8 parts respectively;

9 collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more of said
10 commodities respectively;

11 determining the labor expense to remove said each of said parts
12 from said product;

13 entering said resale prices, said commodity prices, and said
14 labor expense into a spreadsheet model; and

15 executing said spreadsheet model to decide which of said parts to
16 remove from said product or whether to offer said product for
17 resale.

1 8. A computer system for determining the extent to demanufacture
2 a product having a plurality of parts wherein each of said parts
3 comprises one or more commodities, said system comprising:

4 means for collecting one or more resale prices for one or more of
5 said parts respectively;

6 means for collecting one or more commodity prices for one or more
7 of said commodities respectively;

8 means for determining the labor expense to remove said each of
9 said parts from said product;

10 means for entering said resale prices, said commodity prices, and
11 said labor expense into a spreadsheet model; and

12 means for executing said spreadsheet model to decide which of
13 said parts to remove from said product.

14 9. A computer program product for instructing a processor to
15 determine the extent to demanufacture a product having a
16 plurality of parts, wherein each of said parts comprises one or
17 more commodities, said computer program product comprising:

18 a computer readable medium;

19 first computer instruction means for collecting a resale price
20 for said product;

21 second computer instruction means for collecting one or more
22 resale prices for one or more of said parts respectively;

10 third computer instruction means for collecting one or more
11 commodity prices for one or more of said commodities
12 respectively;

13 fourth computer instruction means for determining the labor
14 expense to remove said each of said parts from said product;

15 fifth computer instruction means for entering said resale prices,
16 said commodity prices, and said labor expense into a computer
17 model; and

18 sixth computer instruction means for executing said computer
19 model to make a determination of whether to sell said product, or
20 whether to remove and sell one or more of said parts from said
21 product; and wherein

22 all of said computer instruction means are recorded on said
23 medium.

24 10. The computer program product of claim 9, further comprising a
25 database comprising said resale prices, said commodity prices,
26 and said labor expense, and wherein said database is recorded on
27 said medium.

ABSTRACT

METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT

5 Obsolete and unwanted computer and other products are
demanded according to a method of recovering the largest
revenue. An optimum level of disassembly and parts removal is
determined based on strategies involving outright sale, sale of
parts, disassembly costs, and commodity recovery. Critical parts
are identified and regulatory requirements are included.

10

Recovery Value vs. Machine Age

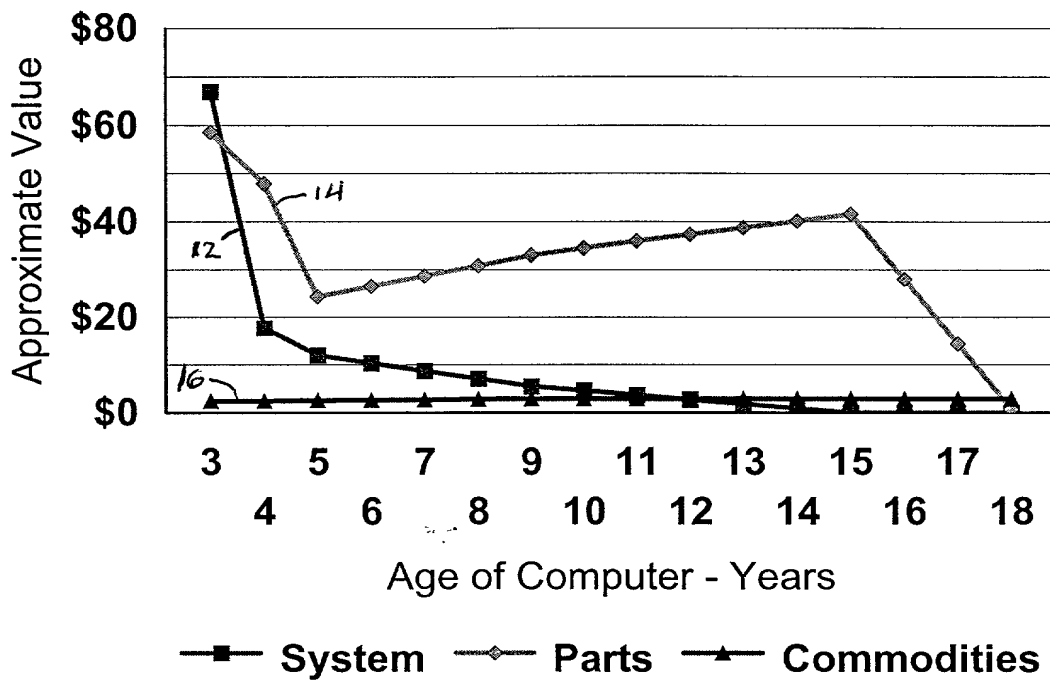


FIG. 1

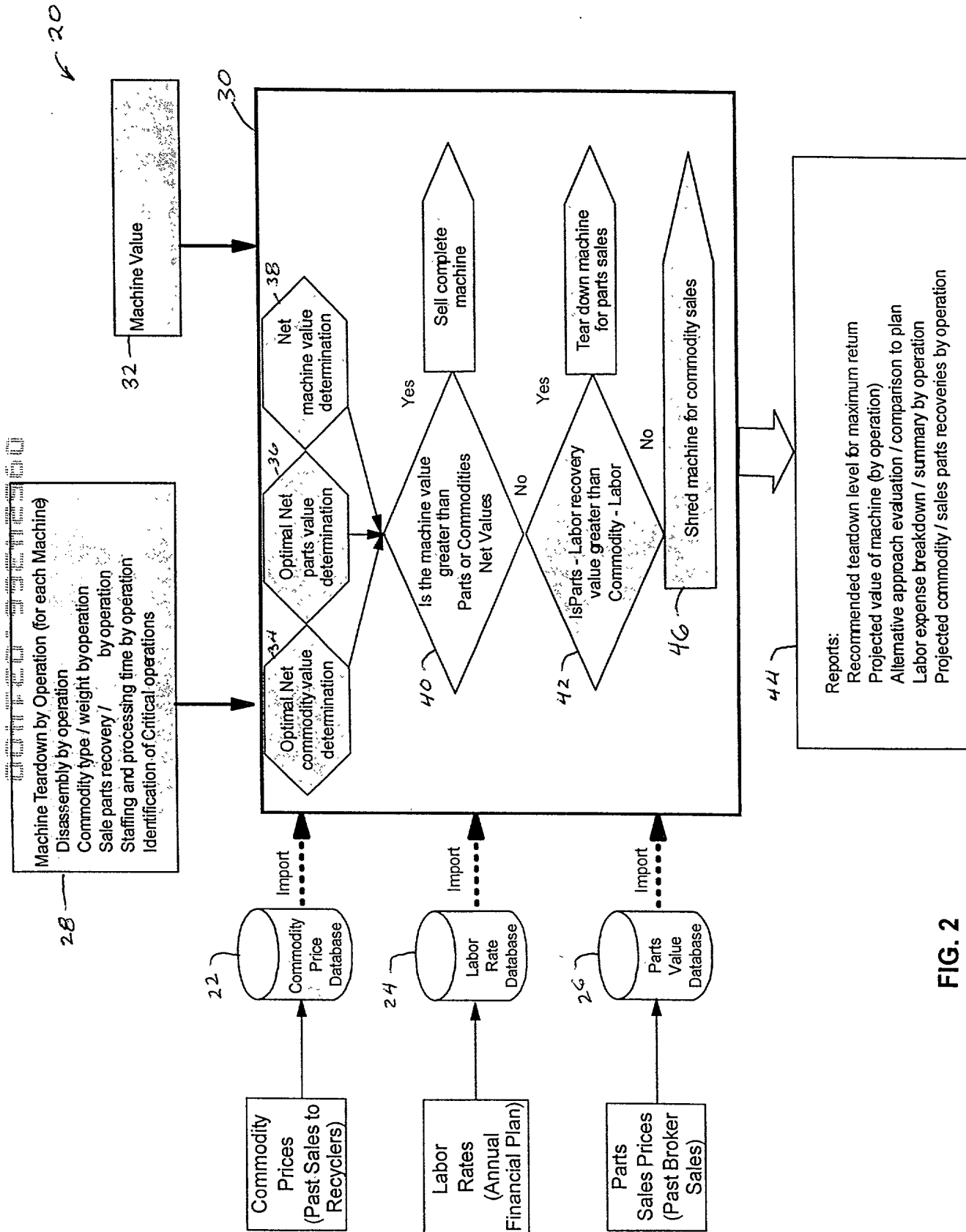


FIG. 2

Docket No.
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Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

English Language Declaration

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

METHOD OF DEMANUFACTURING A PRODUCT

the specification of which

(check one)

☒ is attached hereto.

☐ was filed on _____ as United States Application No. or PCT International Application Number _____ and was amended on _____ (if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d) or Section 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or Section 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Not Claimed

NONE

_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

NONE

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U. S. C. Section 120 of any United States application(s), or Section 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, C. F. R., Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application:

NONE

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. *(list name and registration number)*

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Post Office Address Same as residence.	

Full name of fourth inventor, if any	
Fourth inventor's signature	Date
Residence	
Citizenship	
Post Office Address	

Full name of fifth inventor, if any	
Fifth inventor's signature	Date
Residence	
Citizenship	
Post Office Address	

Full name of sixth inventor, if any	
Sixth inventor's signature	Date
Residence	
Citizenship	
Post Office Address	